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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
INFO RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 1699
RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY 0045
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU PRIORITY 0170
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY 0020
RUEHBM/AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST PRIORITY 0497
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RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB PRIORITY 3401

C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN NEW YORK 000048

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/16/2019

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UNGA](#) [AL](#) [AM](#) [AJ](#) [BO](#) [BK](#) [BU](#) [HR](#) [CY](#) [EN](#)

GG, GR, KV, LG, LH, MK, MD, MW, RO, RS, SI, YI, TU, UP

SUBJECT: EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND THE 64TH GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROSEMARY DICARLO FOR REASONS 1.4 (B & D)

1.(U) SUMMARY: During the fall session of the 64th General Assembly (GA64), the majority in the Eastern European grouping was very pleased with increased U.S. engagement with the UN. As in previous years, most were ready to work together on issues of importance to us and them, such as the annual human rights resolution on Iran. EE states held various chairmanships, in particular of the vital Third Committee, and promoted their own issues, such as trafficking in persons, cybersecurity and the Alliance of Civilizations.

2.(U) Several of the EE countries also had specific issues or disputes, often long-standing ones, that sometimes affected what they did and how they voted during the GA. Kosovo, for example, is the principal issue for both Serbia and Albania. While quieter this year, because the matter was under World Court consideration, the Kosovo matter was active on the margins. Georgia-Russia, Nagorno-Karabakh, the Macedonia name issue and others continued to roil the waters among the EE grouping.

3.(C) We recommend that there be enhanced contact in capitals on GA issues of importance to the U.S. before GA65, and particularly with Georgia and Armenia on the Iran human rights vote. Instructions to shift votes will need to come from high levels of the EE grouping governments. End Summary.

EASTERN EUROPE PLUS

4.(U) The Eastern European grouping assigned to the Senior Advisor for Europe is an interesting mix that goes well beyond what one would think of as Eastern Europe: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania,

Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey and Ukraine. Also included in this USUN grouping is non-UN member Kosovo. Except for Russia, most are not large powers or major players in the UN. The grouping includes the smallest (Baltic States); NATO and EU members and wannabes; long-standing rivals (e.g., Greece/Turkey and Armenia/Azerbaijan). Many have one overriding issue, often territorial and long-standing, through which other questions often are seen.

5.(U) Countries in this grouping generally divided into a Western-leaning group (the majority) and a small Russia-aligned group, with a couple of states on the cusp. As in prior years, the majority of countries in USUN's Eastern European (EE) grouping supported U.S. priorities during the autumn session of the 64th UNGA, including country-specific human rights resolutions on Iran, Burma and the DPRK. They continued to vote against us (along with the entire EU) on such issues as the Cuba embargo, where we remain isolated. On other issues, including the annual Palestinian resolutions, some EE grouping states voted in favor, while many abstained or did not vote. Whatever their positions on specific votes, most of this grouping was very pleased with the new U.S. attitude towards the UN and our enhanced interest in coordinating and negotiating on issues and resolutions. On many occasions, the permanent representatives from the Western-leaning states expressed their pleasure to the Area Advisor at how the new U.S. administration approached the UN this fall.

6.(U) Some longstanding issues are specific to one or two states, such as Kosovo/Serbia; Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenia/Azerbaijan); Cyprus (Cyprus/Greece/Turkey); and the Macedonia name dispute (Macedonia/Greece). These issues sometimes influenced their responses to larger UNGA issues. Much of the GA action for USUN's Area Advisors was in the Third Committee (especially the human rights resolutions), but EE grouping countries were active in the other five committees. Russia, for example, ran a First Committee resolution on cybersecurity.

7.(SBU) The European Union (EU) continued, as in prior years, to exert a large influence on much of the grouping. The EU members of the grouping voted with that organization, while EU candidate-members and hopefuls sided with the EU much of the time. Religion, as expressed through the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) or on Palestinian issues, can affect members' positions, even when the state (Turkey) is a NATO member or seeks to join the EU (Albania).

GENERAL DEBATE

8.(U) Every fall, the new GA starts with a General Debate at which heads of state and other leaders set the tone on issues on which their delegations will focus during the GA. Sometimes, these speakers stoke the fire with other countries. This leads to numerous subsequent "rights of reply." All of the countries in the EE grouping spoke, with the exception of UN non-member Kosovo. Below are key points from several interventions:

Albania: Prime Minister Berisha urged the international community to recognize Kosovo and called Iran and the DPRK "two countries that threaten the world with their dangerous programs."

Armenia: Foreign Minister Nalbandian called on the UN to "prevent genocide, war crimes (and) ethnic cleansing." He accused Azerbaijan of "open aggression" and of employing "mercenaries, closely linked to terrorist organizations, (who) ultimately claimed the lives of tens of thousands of civilians."

Azerbaijan: Predictably, Foreign Minister Mammadyarov had a different take on N-K, which he called a "major threat to international and regional peace and security." Armenian

"aggression (has) ethnically cleansed" nearly one million people and has destroyed " thousands of Azerbaijani historical-cultural heritage" sites.

Cyprus: President Christofias decried the 1974 "crimes" of Turkey and called on Ankara to cease pushing for a confederal state. He expressed his "readiness to initiate a dialogue with the Turkish leadership("

Estonia: President Ilves called on UN members to avoid the use of force against the "territorial integrity or political independence" of other states. Lest anyone miss his meaning, he stated Estonia's "firm support for the security(sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Georgia. He also expressed concern about increasing numbers of cyber threats on his country.

Georgia: President Saakashvili decried the "deep wound" that runs through Georgia and warned that "Europe is today being

divided by a new wall, built by an outside force(whose ideas were collectively and decisively defeated and rejected just 20 years ago." Georgia had suffered "ethnic cleansing, mass violations of human rights, and illegal occupation" by people who will "do it again, unless they are stopped." He also cited "one of my personal heroes from Russia, Anna Politkovskaya, so brutally silenced."

Greece: Ambassador Mitsialis accused Macedonia of seeking "exclusive rights to the name" and called Cyprus an "open wound at the very heart of Europe," where "unspeakable atrocities of the past come to light(" He lamented that the "Turkish Parliament maintains a threat of war against my country."

Macedonia: President Ivanov accused Greece of a "flagrant violation of (its) international obligations," when it blocked Skopje's NATO membership.

Moldova: Ambassador Cujba stated that "Moldova faces the secessionist phenomenon in the eastern regions of the country." He continued that the new Moldovan Government sought an "increased U.S. and EU role (in order to) revive its efforts towards withdrawing foreign troops" from Transnistria. He accused the "so-called Transnistrian authorities(of gravely violating the right(s) of Moldovan citizens("

Russia: President Medvedev rejected the use of force in regional conflicts and called Georgia "reckless." He promoted Moscow's proposal for a new European security organization and expressed "hope that the Cold War has been left behind."

Serbia: President Tadic focused on Kosovo, calling it "one of the most dangerous challenges to the(international system since the founding" of the UN. He declared that Serbia will never, under any circumstances(recognize" Kosovo's UDI.

Turkey: Prime Minister Erdogan praised the Alliance of Civilizations and issued what sounded like an ultimatum on Cyprus: "If a solution cannot be found due to Greek Cypriot intransigence, as was the case in 2004, the normalization of the status of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus will become a necessity that can no longer be delayed." He also denounced Israeli "aggression against Gaza," as documented in the Goldstone Report.

Ukraine: President Yushchenko stressed that Ukraine will "not accept any forms of interference into internal affairs of sovereign states (or) any pressure on them(" He warned against "imperial ambitions" and lamented "very disconcerting reemerged signals from the past." He called on "all UN member states and especially the permanent members of the Security Council (to be) exemplary in abiding by the principles of international law("

WHERE THEY STOOD ON GENERAL ASSEMBLY ISSUES

9.(C) The majority of the resolutions that mattered most to us were repeats. On those, most of the EE grouping was with us much of the time, especially the EU/NATO members and aspirants. Those included the sensitive and much-negotiated "Combating Defamation of Religions," pushed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In the third committee Bosnia-Herzegovina voted with Russia and Turkey

against the U.S., EU and most of the EE grouping but reversed itself in Plenary and abstained. Most again were with us on the DPRK, Myanmar and Iran rights resolutions. The Iran resolution, our top priority, was adopted by a wider margin than in recent years, although Georgia continued to abstain on Iran, concerned that Iran might accord diplomatic recognition to Abkhazia.

10.(U) Similarly, the EE grouping generally maintained its voting patterns of previous years on the numerous annual Palestinian-related issues, siding with the vast majority on some where we were nearly isolated and abstaining (Western-leaning) or voting in favor (Turkey, Russia and Russia-leaning) on votes that were closer, such as the resolution on the "Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices." The one EE grouping state that most varied its vote on these resolutions was OIC member Albania, which voted in favor of ones on which the rest abstained and abstained on others.

11.(U) Global economic issues figured more prominently in the EE grouping's calculations, particularly during the General Debate, than they did last year. The global financial meltdown was not a particular focus for most of the grouping in GA63, although it already was high on the agenda for the Western Europeans. This year, however, almost all of the EE heads of state and government gave considerable focus to it and related crises of food, energy, poverty and climate during their General Debate interventions. Those matters, along with women's issues and UN systemic questions, figured somewhat more prominently in the Area Advisor's discussions with the EE permanent representatives, although not as frequently as they did with his colleague who covered the Western European countries.

12.(U) Also on the economic front were Second Committee issues of importance to the U.S. The EE grouping states generally were supportive of the resolutions. For example:

-- The U.S. cybersecurity resolution that focused on infrastructure protection. Half of the EE grouping states co-sponsored this U.S. resolution.

-- Another resolution that we strongly backed, "Legal Empowerment of the Poor," was strongly opposed by Russia and others from outside the EE grouping but received support from most of the EE countries.

-- The Israeli resolution, "Agricultural Technology for Development," was politicized this year by the Arab group. Nonetheless, more the half of the EE grouping were co-sponsors. Interestingly, Azerbaijan did not remove itself as a co-sponsor but was absent for the vote.

13.(U) Most of the EE grouping members had some issue or chairmanship that was of importance to them during GA64. Those included:

Albania was active in the OIC and played a role in moderating language proposed by some of the more extreme OIC members.

Armenia became chair of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Azerbaijan sponsored a resolution on the Transnational-Eurasian Information Superhighway, which we co-sponsored, and proposed international recognition of the

Novruz religious holiday. They also publicized the November agreement establishing the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking States.

Belarus was the driving delegation on trafficking in persons and was active on renewable energy and climate change.

Bosnia was a bit shaky on its voting this fall, siding with Cuba, for example, on its resolution on equitable geographic distribution in the membership of human rights treaty bodies. The brand-new Permanent Representative told us that the vote had been a "technical mistake" and would be corrected. Similarly, on the OIC's "Defamation of Religions," B-H voted yes in committee but shifted back to abstention in the plenary.

Bulgaria assumed the chair of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BESC), but the Permanent Representative noted that there actually is not much cooperation with the UN. The BSEC is focused primarily on the EU.

Croatia is ending its two-year term on the Security Council and likely will be more active in GA matters during the remainder of the 64th session.

Estonia chairs the Board of the UN Women's Development Fund (UNIFEM) and is beginning service as co-facilitator of the System-Wide Coherence effort to streamline the UN.

Greece ran a resolution calling for the "Return or Restitution of Cultural Property to the Countries of Origin." The coordinator of the Sixth Committee negotiations on the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism was the Greek MFA Legal Advisor.

Kosovo is not a UN member but provided some fireworks on the margins (see below). They established a consulate general in New York during this period and will attempt to become more active in and around the UN.

Latvia very ably chaired the fractious Third Committee.

Lithuania assumed the chairmanship of the Community of Democracies and hopes that the U.S. will become active in the organization. They also publicized and chaired an event to publicize the danger of sea-dumped chemical munitions, bringing their ambassador from Geneva to give the keynote address.

Macedonia was one of only two EE grouping countries to vote no on the Goldstone resolution.

Moldova promoted a resolution on young people and publicly supported the work of the UN Department of Public Information.

Montenegro had a quiet fall but did announce its wish to become a member of the Human Rights Council and the UNESCO Executive Board.

Russia was active primarily in the Security Council but did run a First Committee resolution on "Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security" on which we joined consensus. They also put forward their annual resolution decrying racism and xenophobia, which is aimed against the Baltic states and Ukraine, and caused their

usual difficulties over the yearly resolution on combating desertification. In addition, the Russian delegation tried to secure a GA resolution to bring to a head their inexplicable ten-year effort to have the GA direct the Security Council to establish guidelines for SC imposition of sanctions under Chapter Seven.

Serbia made the most important vote switch of GA64, moving from a vote for Iran last year to being absent for this

year's Iran human rights resolution. Serbia served as a vice-chair of the Second Committee.

Slovenia was quiet during the fall, working behind the scenes to promote its campaign for the Security Council. They supplied the most surprising vote of the fall, voting for the Goldstone resolution on which most Europeans abstained or voted no.

Turkey focused heavily on its Security Council duties but was active on various GA issues, including the Alliance of Civilizations (co-sponsor with Spain), climate change, water issues and disarmament matters, expressing concern about the "well-documented link" between the illegal arms trade and terrorism. They voted for the Goldstone resolution, with the Permanent Representative calling on the UN to "combat impunity (and) uphold accountability("

Ukraine served as a vice-chair of the First Committee and was one of only two EE grouping countries to vote no with us on Goldstone. They were active on climate change because of the long-term damage from Chernobyl and put themselves forward for the Security Council in 2016. They argued that they were well-qualified to serve on the Council, having given up nuclear weapons, having been a significant troop-contributing country and having served with distinction on the HRC.

SENSITIVE EE GROUPING ISSUES IN AND AROUND THE GA

14.(C) Several states in the EE grouping have a dispute with a neighbor or other vital issue that affects what they do at the GA, even if the issue was not front-and-center that particular year. They include:

Kosovo: This is both Serbia's and Albania's overriding issue and is of high interest to Russia. Because Kosovo's UDI was under consideration at the ICJ this fall, the issue was quiet in terms of resolutions. The absence of a resolution enabled Serbia to move back toward us on Iran. The Albanian Ambassador told us that he had made a pro-OIC vote specifically in order to gain leverage on his quest to get additional Arab countries to recognize Kosovo.

On the margins, however, the Kosovo issue was anything but quiet. Russia caused a flap over Albania's alleged assistance to Kosovo's President to access the GA floor during the General Debate. The Russians called for Security Council consultations, during which they demanded of the UN Secretariat to know how the Kosovars got into the GA hall. The Russian Permanent Representative expressed concern that unauthorized persons had gained access to a place where President Medvedev and other heads of state were. The Secretariat replied that "for the past 65 years," member states have invited individuals in their personal capacity to attend the General Debate while their leader was speaking. Russia then demanded that a UN "watcher" accompany Kosovars at all bilateral meetings. Meanwhile, Albania sent a note

expressing "deep concern" over "Serbian backstage interference" during PM Berisha's General Debate intervention, calling it an "unacceptable effort to disrupt and create confusion" in the GA hall.

Georgia/Russia: A year after the Russian invasion, this rivalry had settled into something like a cold war at the UN. Just prior to the start of GA64, however, the Georgians introduced a successful resolution on the "Status of Internally Displaced Persons" from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This was followed closely by President Saakashvili's pointed accusations in his General Debate remarks and the Tagliavini Report, which both Georgia and Russia read as supporting their points on who was responsible for the war. The Georgian report on the eighth round of Geneva Talks, circulated here as a UN document, listed numerous transgressions by the "Russian occupational forces and the proxy authorities." In December, Georgia complained that Moscow had even introduced Russian telephone codes into the occupied territories in an effort to undermine Georgian

sovereignty.

Macedonia Name Issue: GA64 started off with some sharp remarks and rights of reply on both sides. However, on balance, this issue was quieter than in GA63. It remains issue number one when we speak with the Macedonian Ambassador, but even he is more optimistic this year because of the new Greek government.

Ukraine Famine: Having suffered successive defeats in GA62 and GA63 in trying to place an item on the GA agenda recognizing the 75th anniversary of the Stalin-created Great Famine (Holodomor), the Ukrainians wisely did not make another attempt this fall. Instead, they organized a series of panels and events that they could control, both at the UN and outside, culminating in a somber commemoration service in St. Patrick's Cathedral at which Senator Schumer spoke.

Moldova/Transnistria: This issue stayed well under the GA radar, except for the Permanent Representative's General Debate remarks.

Nagorno-Karabakh (N-K): As noted above, Armenia and Azerbaijan focused on a few other issues during GA64, but N-K always re-surfaced. Azerbaijan started out on the first day of GA64 with a complaint about Armenia's "open defiance" of the UN, and the exchanges continued through the General Debate and rights of reply to the widely circulated Azeri report on the "Armed Aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan: Root Causes and Consequences." More recently, Azerbaijan has presented the Contact Group missions a re-written draft resolution on the "Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan."

Cyprus: This issue continued to be dealt with primarily in the Security Council, but it did rear its head in the GA, from time to time. For example, the Cypriot Permanent Representative felt compelled to reply to PM Erdogan's General Debate remarks. He called the Turkish Cypriot "state" in the north an "illegal entity that has been universally condemned" and criticized the Turkish occupation of part of Cyprus.

COMMENT

15.(C) COMMENT On balance, the EE grouping states are a

positive for the U.S. in the UNGA. Some, such as the EU and NATO members, supply steady and reliable support for our issues, except for some Middle Eastern issues where we always are isolated. Others, especially Russia and Belarus, very often are on the other side on GA issues. Armenia and Azerbaijan frequently vote with Russia but sometimes abstain with the EU. We do not predict major shifts in GA65, although we are hopeful that Serbia will continue to find its way back to the Western-leaning camp and that its GA63 votes for Iran will have been an aberration. Turkey bears watching, as it now nearly always votes for the various Middle Eastern resolutions, even when the EU abstains.

16.(C) We would welcome our posts' enhancing interaction on GA issues of importance to the U.S. with any and all of the EE grouping states during the non-peak UNGA period (January-August). In particular, however, posts' excellent efforts should continue in Tbilisi and Yerevan to convince both Georgia and Armenia to shift on the Iran human rights vote. Armenia, in particular, will lose an important excuse re Iran when the border with Turkey is open. We recommend concerted action in capitals because, in contrast to some delegations of smaller states in other regions, the EE permanent representatives in New York do not appear to have much latitude to decide how to vote. They can and do make recommendations, but issues that are important to us are important enough to be decided at high levels in capitals.

END COMMENT

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